

The Honorable Mayor Thomas M. Menino
Address to the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
December 10, 2013

Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Bob. Thank you, Paul. Thank you to everyone here. I have the best business community in the country.

The next time I give a big speech like this, it will probably be in a lecture hall. You are welcome to come, but I am a very tough grader.

Professor Menino. Think about that for a second. Things change.

And that's what I want to talk about today: change. About renewal.

Lots of things make a place a city – crowds, commerce, heights. But, the thing that makes a city most is change, the fact that something new is always just around the corner. It's change that attracts immigrants. It's opportunity that draws students. It's action that invites visitors. And it's progress in a city that compels neighbors to stay neighbors and to stay here. There are places you would go to enjoy sameness, but they aren't cities. There are places you would go to soak in the status quo, but they aren't here.

Here, change has made an old city new. Here, change means that every five year-old is guaranteed full day kindergarten. If you looked around a first grade class the day I took office, one in every five kids had no kindergarten education. We changed that. And today we have nearly 3,000 three and four year-olds getting early education every year at the Boston Public Schools.

Here, change brought a convention center and then an entire new district to our waterfront. Change erased parking lots and filled empty buildings and brought 5,000 new workers and new working styles.

I want to recount some of the change that's behind us with the hope it will help us embrace the change that's ahead.

In two decades together:

We added 13,000,000 square feet of office space. That's like adding a Prudential Tower every other year. And we created jobs with it. Next year we will have more people working in Boston than at any point in its history.

We built as much new housing as Somerville has altogether, and added more affordable housing than Wellesley has of any type. We also redeveloped 2,300 of new public housing.

Over two decades, change made great centers of Roslindale Village, Ashmont, Kenmore Square, and Maverick Square. It brought a vibrant Blue Hill Avenue through Grove Hall. The Ferdinand Building is back in Dudley and so is hope. Change brought these things.

We changed and so our city is now more financially secure than ever. We invested in our people, but we did so wisely. When I took office, our reserves were negative \$23,000,000. In January, we will leave with an estimated \$200,000,000 dollars in reserve. That's a big chunk of change. We adapted so that we could do this during two recessions and as the state cut local aid.

We turned Beantown to Greentown. We added twenty percent more green space. We shrunk our carbon footprint so much that it was like taking a city the size of Cambridge off the grid. In fact, this fall Boston was named the number one energy efficient city in the country.

We put 200,000 teens into summer jobs.

We cut crime in half. The year I took office, we had 98 homicides. Today, we have 38. And today, crime prevention isn't just a police issue, it's a public health issue and a whole city issue.

We took the stigma out of treating AIDS, the smoke out of restaurants, and the sugary drinks out of schools. Boston was the first city to talk frankly about racial disparities in health and the first to do something about it.

We created the Office of New Bostonians to welcome new immigrants with services and connections, and we have become, proudly, a majority-minority city.

We led the way on same-sex marriage. Almost one of every ten marriage licenses issued in Boston is to a same-sex couple.

We pioneered new technologies. We invented Citizens Connect and New Urban Mechanics.

We upgraded our hotline and expanded its reach. And we've done all of this in a way that's brought government closer to people. Humans answer our phones, in under six seconds, and they have done it more than 2,000,000 times.

We brought in over twenty new supermarkets, expanded farmers markets, permitted over 50 food trucks, and supported food incubators to bring more healthy food and good jobs to our city.

In 1996, one in four high school students passed the state math exams. Today, almost 90 percent do. More students graduate than ever before and fewer drop out. Change came to places like the old Gavin School and Orchard Gardens. Change invented TechBoston and the Edward M. Kennedy Health Careers Academy. Change brought bi-lingual schools and inclusive classrooms. Ninety-four percent of our parents now report that their child's school is a good or great place to learn. That's change! Change meant our district was named most improved in the country and one of the twenty most improved in the world. Change is bringing new flexibilities to our classrooms and more kids to quality schools, closer to home.

Change makes cities, and great change makes great cities.

I believe we are on the cusp of more great change. I have faith in Marty Walsh and what he will accomplish with all of you. The Mayor-Elect and I are working together to make sure his start is smooth. This isn't about Tom or Marty. It's about the people of our city.

Over the summer we began executing a ten-point transition plan. It's very first priority was to make sure that our city didn't miss a beat. So we focused on a safe summer, a strong summer jobs program, and a good start to the school-year.

We kept Boston's economy humming and its services to constituents top notch.

And we worked to deliver the city in outstanding financial shape. I am proud that the 2014 budget is on track and on target. The New Mayor will inherit a balanced budget, healthy reserves, a growing tax base, and a triple A bond rating, the highest in Boston's history.

We created the Next Boston transition blog and posted 84 times on key departments, looming issues, and little-known aspects of city government. We opened and equipped a transition office for the Mayor-Elect. And I have spoken with him almost daily to touch base on various city issues. We provided cabinet and department head briefings. We organized a snow exercise for him to see the team at work. Next week, we will start working through a final transition check list, ticking off everything

from legal documents to technology switches so that one administration can seamlessly turnover to the next.

Great cities plan for great change – it doesn't just happen – and I am pleased at how well our teams are working together.

I have told the Mayor-Elect that I am here to help. But, I won't be hanging around to critique his work. The job is hard enough already. Even with the city poised to achieve great new heights, I see three great changes that will make the task of leading especially tough.

First, the dramatic decline in Federal support. I don't see federal revenues or federal policy returning to levels we had during my terms. The climate in Washington is poison and the problem solving is rare. Two essential parts of our city – non-profits and the research sector – will need to re-invent their operating models for a new day.

Second, the substantial increase in income inequality. People born here have a better chance of moving up the ladder than in most other big cities. But that means the problem is only less worse here than in other places. We need to unleash all of our ideas and energy towards solving this problem. More of the same – even the good same – won't be enough. And you, the partners in the business community, will need to see that it's in your interest too, that the city isn't a place divided.

If you aren't talking about this in your boardrooms, you should be. If you aren't worrying about what it means for your workforce and your customers, you are missing the boat. If you don't think a new generation of division will damage this city, you haven't looked around the world, where deep inequalities breed deep distrust.

This year, Boston's business community has taken the lead on achieving pay equity for women. I hope you will see extreme in-equality in a similar light: A city only works when it works for everyone.

The third looming challenge is changes to higher education. Costs of college are putting it further out of reach and technology is making it easier to access education in other ways. Both are potential threats to this pillar of Boston's economy and the thing that creates the most appeal for our businesses and visitors.

I don't agree with all the hand-wringing about graduates "leaving." First, almost one in every

two students that goes to college here stays here. And second, the ones that leave spread ideas around the world. We need to worry less about where graduates go and more about whether students will still come in droves a decade from now.

Progress on all three fronts will need to be pushed and prodded and sometimes poked. Great cities undertake great change, but not all on their own. It will be in the new mayor's hands and in yours.

I spent last weekend lighting seventeen trees around our city. I talked with thousands of people – there was even one person I had never met before. In every neighborhood, I could sense the love people have for our city. I could feel the partnership they have with each other. But the thing I could see above all, the thing I was proudest of, was the change everywhere. There was more opportunity and more progress and more action everywhere. The city is a lot different than it was twenty years ago. Change has made us strong.

I thank you for everything you have done for me and for the people of our city. As I leave this stage for another, I ask just one last thing: Please hire a summer jobs kid.

Some things never change.